

Attitudes towards training in multinational companies

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Researchers of many different fields have studied the questions of organizational learning and knowledge.

Foreign owned companies and joint ventures were observed in this paper, and the goal was to analyse the following topics:

- The opinion of organizational members about conditions of education (inhibitor and facilitating factors of learning)*
- Attitudes on the area of reception and utilization of knowledge*
- Attitudes and perceptions on sharing of knowledge*

The conclusion that has been established is that training and education are of important value and a part of strategy in the observed organizations. The general satisfaction with training is considered to be at an overall high and those people questioned regarded it as useful to their work. The perceived sharing of knowledge is also high. In the area of new ideas, only half of the sample thinks that the management facilitates them and, in the area of tolerating mistakes, similar characteristics were found. Concerning the appreciation of participation in training, the majority believe that it is not appreciated and awarded.

Keywords: learning, knowledge, organization, training, satisfaction

1. Introduction

Because the environment of companies is constantly changing, there must be flexibility for change to promote continued growth and existence. The resource-based approach, which focuses on the inner strategic resources of each company, can be the basis of long term competitive advantage and is gaining in significance. These competence-based company theories define each company in terms that clarify the sets of skills and abilities which influence the improvement and the strategic alternatives of organization (Szabó–Kocsis 2003).

This theory leads to the appreciation of the specific organizational learning, since this can form the basis of core competences which can be reached. Core competences do not derive solely from the performances of individuals, but collective learning processes are also needed for their development. As a consequence, experts believe that knowledge has become the central production

factor of the company. (Senge 1998, Hoványi 2005, Szabó–Kocsis 2003) Only companies which gradually create new knowledge and quickly share it within the whole organization can remain successful. The new knowledge is practical only if it results in a new product or service. In this manner, the management turns learning and knowledge management into increasing progression.

By developing these thoughts, the notion of knowledge management comes into being. The goal is to handle knowledge as a strategic resource. On the basis of the already mentioned theories and models, the flow of knowledge is promoted within the organization. The authors emphasize the importance of the personal and cultural approach in addition to the technical and informational approach, and they again consider the already mentioned cultural characteristics important in connection with the problem of conceivability and transferability of knowledge. (Sümeiginé 2002, Kováts 2003).

In this context, from a practical view, there are two main streams of thought. The first of them focuses on the importance of the human approach by drawing attention to the importance of the development and influence of the individual behaviour. The second view centres on the information technology approach to the storage and sharing of knowledge.

Foreign owned companies and joint ventures were examined extensively. Among experts, there are different views about the influx of foreign capital and knowledge. However, the majority of economists consider the involvement of foreigners in the economy a positive feature. Studies which try to evaluate mergers and acquisitions draw our attention to the high rate of failures. At the examined companies “profitability, efficiency and the increase of the turnover are far behind the expectations”. (Heidrich 2003) According to experts, a possible reason for this is inappropriate handling of differences between organizational cultures.

2. Learning processes in the organization

Researchers of many different fields have studied the questions of organizational learning and knowledge. They composed their ideas in the conceptual system of their respective scope of expertise. These different approaches express the different sides of these categories; however, there are some similarities in them.

Thus, it is vital to define what we mean by organizational learning. According to a widely accepted approach, organizational learning is the process of collective information processing which results in the growth of organizational set of knowledge. Learning takes place both on individual and collective levels.

The resource based organizational theories, such as the concept of organizational learning, the learning organization concept and the knowledge management concept focus on the questions mentioned above. The central question of these approaches is the creation of knowledge and its connection with learning. From the great amount of the special literature of the approaches, ideas and models are presented which are suitable to the analysis of the results of said investigations.

Learning requires the common activities of at least two participants. It cannot be interpreted in itself; it makes sense only through the relationship of the participants. This phenomenon is best described by the knowledge spiral of Nonaka (Krogh et al 2000):

- Socialization: existential, face to face, tacit→tacit
- Externalization: reflective, peer-to-peer, explicit→tacit
- Combination: systemic, collaborative, explicit→explicit
- Internalization: collective, on the site, explicit→tacit

There are three prerequisites to the creation of organizational knowledge (Krogh et al 2000).

The company as a whole is able to create new knowledge.

1. This common knowledge can be disseminated inside the organization based on communication processes.
2. New knowledge can be manifested either in a new product, a new service or in the structure of the organization.
3. The creation of knowledge is based on continuous interaction between explicit and tacit knowledge, which is called knowledge conversion.

Several factors induce these processes.

“Knowledge creation is supported by five enabling conditions:

- autonomy
- redundancy
- creative chaos
- Requisite variety and intention.” (Krogh et al 2000, p. 97.)

On this theoretical basis Kapás summarised the arts of organizational knowledge.

Table 1. Organizational knowledge

The arts of knowledge		
	Explicit knowledge	Implicit /tacit/ knowledge
individual knowledge	Embrained knowledge learning by studying	Embodied knowledge learning by doing
collective knowledge	Encoded knowledge information shared knowledge in the organization	Embedded knowledge Organic and dynamic path-dependent

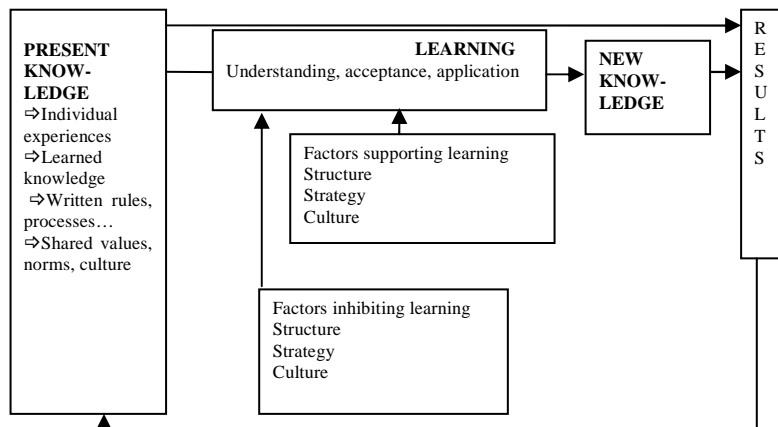
Source: Kapás (1999)

Many see a connection between the dominant type of knowledge inside the organization and organizational structure. Companies where explicit knowledge is dominant are usually characterised by a formal coordination and control structure. Where implicit knowledge is dominant, rather decentralised structure and informal coordination mechanism is characteristic. The conditions of mobilizing this knowledge are autonomy and commitment, without which knowledge remains latent (Kapás 1999).

The kinds of knowledge can be distinguished like this only in theory.

Based on the above mentioned models the framework of our research can be depicted as follows (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Factors inhibiting and supporting learning



Source: own construction

The goal of this paper is to analyse the following questions topics:

1. The opinion of organizational members about conditions of education (inhibitor and facilitating factor of learning)
2. Attitudes on the area of reception and utilization of knowledge
3. Attitudes and perceptions on sharing of knowledge

Answering these questions is very important for both members and for management because it adds useful information about application of means which were spent on education.

The structure of questionnaire:

The main question is the following: if the educations add to the raise of the level of working, and to the raise of efficiency in opinion of organizational members.

The main topics of the questionnaire:

1. Attitudes towards the educations
2. Perceived utility and expediency
3. Sharing of knowledge

3. The result of the empirical researches

3.1. The sample

The members of five Hungarian joint ventures which also operate in the Southern-Hungarian Region were asked to fill in a questionnaire. The sample contains 167 people who are, unfortunately, not evenly distributed within the five companies. All members of the Szeged branches of the above mentioned companies were given a questionnaire due to their different level of willingness to answer questions and the number of questionnaires returned from the different branches varied on a large scale ranging from 18–49.

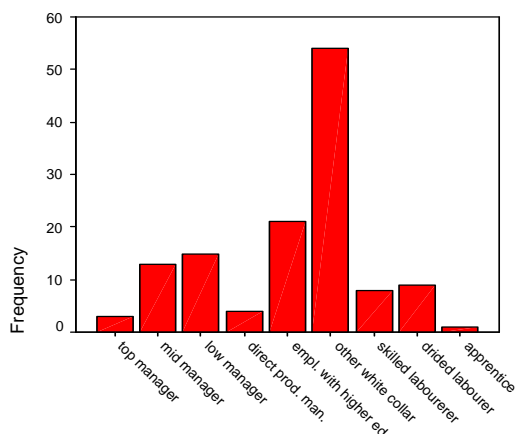
The composition of the sample:

About 25% managers of different levels

About 54% white collar employees not of managerial level

About 21% blue collar employees not of managerial level (Figure 1).

Figure 2. Status



Source: own construction

3.2. Participation in trainings

The majority, 77% of the sample, generally participate in trainings; while 20 % do not attend them (3% did not answer this question). This Research reveals that whether or not an employee participates in trainings is not necessarily dependent on his attitude, but rather on whether he is provided trainings by his company. This conclusion was reached because it was discovered that most of the participants are financed by their companies.

The majority of trainings took place in working hours; only eight employees attended them outside working hours. The amount of trainings depends on their position in the hierarchy of the company. 90% of managers, 84% of white collar employees and only 53 % of blue collar employees attend trainings. During the last two years, 39.4% of attendants took part in one to two; 37% in three to five and 23.6% in more than five training sessions. There is a significant connection between the trainings of the last two years and the position of the participants.

3.3. General satisfaction with trainings

Out of the 128 attendants, 118 answered the relevant questions. The questionnaire provided contains a five grade Likert scale; five representing completely satisfied, and one representing completely dissatisfied. 66% can be considered satisfied (4–5 grade) while 34% dissatisfied (1, 2, 3). A grade of three is considered negative, rather than positive.

There were not any significant differences found when the level of satisfaction was examined in the view of position, age, etc. However, the connection between satisfaction regarding position and qualification is worth pointing out. While 80% of managers and employees with higher education can be considered satisfied, the relevant percentage in the case of lower level employees is only 60%. This difference, however, is not significant statistically. The level of satisfaction was also different in the case of colleagues or experts from outside conducting the training. It was 55% and 70% respectively.

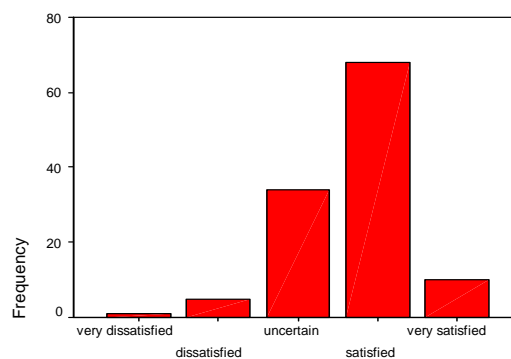
Table 2. Number of trainings in the last two years

Status		1–2	3–5	5+	Sum
	manager	8	17	12	37
	other white collar	29	28	17	74
	other labourer	13	2	1	16
	Sum	50	47	30	127

Source: own construction

General satisfaction with the trainings organized by the company.

Figure 2. Are you satisfied with the trainings organized by your company?

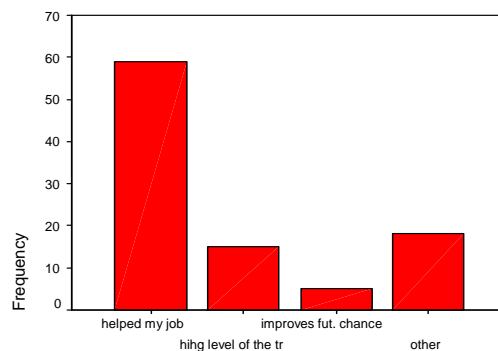


Source: own construction

3.4. Good and bad training sessions

Most are interested in what makes a training session good. So an open question was asked about what makes the best training they have ever had so good. 61% consider it a good training because it is practical and makes their work easier and necessary for their work. 16% judge the quality of trainings based on how the lecturer prepares for the sessions, the atmosphere and the level of organizing the lessons. 5 % find the training useful because it provides them with information which will increase their chances in the labour market (Figure 3).

Figure 3. What made your best training so far the best?



Source: own construction

Only 21% have taken part in bad training sessions, the reasons given were:

- Lack of qualification of lecturers
- Disorganization
- Badly conducted lectures
- Lectures not applicable

3.5. Organizational atmosphere

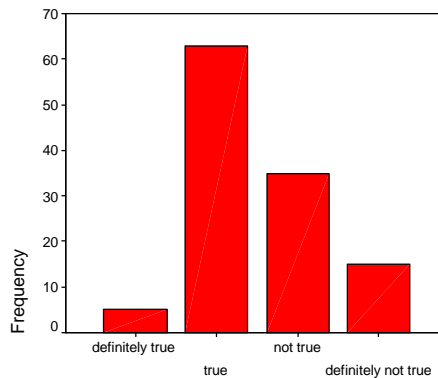
Concerning funding of the training, the attitude of the companies is considered positively by employees, since the majority of trainings are financed by the companies and they are held during working hours.

Other aspects that were considered:

A 4 grade Likert scale was applied; 1 representing absolutely typical, and 4 representing absolutely not typical. In the field of new ideas, 50% think the management facilitates them (and the other half think it does not). Similar results

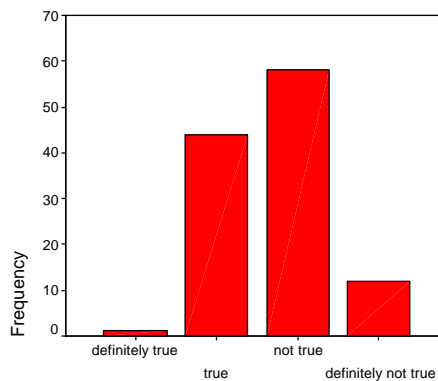
were found in situations concerning tolerating mistakes. The majority of employees draw attention to the lack of tolerance if their new ideas do not work. The situation is worsened concerning the appreciation of participating in trainings; since only 28% feel it is appreciated and rewarded. As a result, in many respects the organizational culture cannot be considered as an environment that is learning facilitating. However, 70% still share the new knowledge with their colleagues.

Figure 4. The management supports me in trying out my own ideas



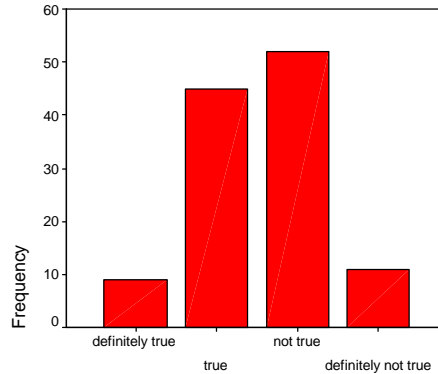
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Figure 5. The management is tolerant if my own ideas don't work



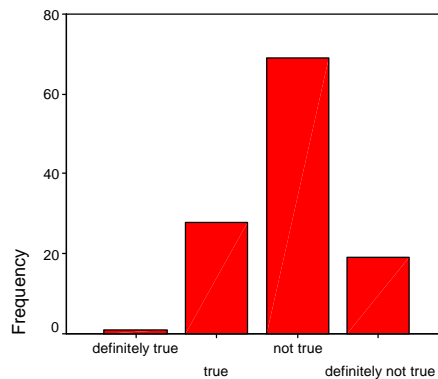
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Figure 6. Making a mistake has very negative consequences in our company



Source: own construction

Figure 7. The management appreciates me for taking part in training

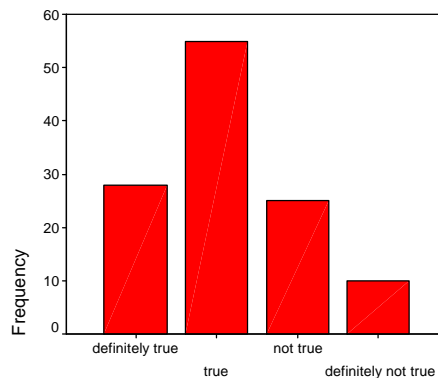


Source: own construction

Significant differences were not found between the demographic factors and the learning facilitating atmosphere of the companies. However, some interesting phenomena should be highlighted.

Higher level and senior employees are given more chances to try out their new ideas. As far as the failure of new ideas is concerned, the younger and newer employees perceive a higher level of tolerance. The lower an employee is situated in the hierarchy of the company, the worse he perceives the consequences of his mistakes, and the lower the level of knowledge transfer is.

Figure 8. I always discuss with colleagues what we heard in the training



Source: own construction

The same tendency concerning satisfaction with trainings and the level of facilitating new ideas was found.

4. Summary

The summary of conclusions reached is on the basis of research in specific cases of the questioned members of companies. The majority of the samples questioned generally participate in training and their companies provided the training. The training took place during working hours and companies financed them.

The conclusion reached is that training and learning are an important value in these organizations and a part of their operating strategy. The general satisfaction with the training can be considered high and questioned people regarded them as useful in their work. The perceived sharing of knowledge is also high. However, in the field of new ideas, only half of the sample thinks that the management facilitates them; and in the area of tolerating mistakes, similar characteristics were found. Concerning the appreciation of participation in trainings, the majority think that it is not appreciated and rewarded.

During the midst of research, the following important question emerged: in reflection of the above mentioned contradictions, does the position of the motivation have a crucial significance because the extrinsic motivators of the training are low and the intrinsic motivators gain greater significance in the efficiency of learning? This question determines that further research is needed in this topic.

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